

# NATURE EXPLORERS

(Fall and Spring Visits)

Four Year Old Kindergarten – Rahr Memorial School Forest

## ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

Through outdoor play, we can better understand and appreciate the natural world.

## ASSESSMENT

Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding by following the School Forest rules (it is their first trip to the woods) and participating in a few activities, as well as free play time.

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## CLASS OUTLINE

- I. Setup
- II. Sample Schedules (full day and half day)
- III. Introduction
- IV. Nature Play Area
- V. Dunes Explorers
- VI. Beach Explorers
- VII. Art
- VIII. Conclusion
- IX. Cleanup

Safety

Optional/Rainy Day Activities

Resources

Optional Parent Letter

Additional Information

School Forest map

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## MATERIALS

Nature Play Area

- Materials listed in NPA lesson guide

Dunes Explorers

- Shovels
- Pails
- Sand toys

Beach Explorers

- Shovels
- Pails

Art

Art supplies depend on which activity you plan to do... look in lesson plan and let the SF coordinator know which one you choose

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## CLASS PROCEDURES

- I. Setup
  - To reserve your date at the forest, complete the on-line reservation form. The School Forest secretary will contact you via e-mail to confirm your visit.
  - Fill out and submit a field trip request form (to reserve your bus).
  - Teachers can schedule a time when the School Forest Coordinator can meet with them at school to discuss the visit. Teachers will be asked to teach at least one of the activities during the day. The School Forest Coordinator may also be available to teach at one of the stations. Preparation time will be needed to review the activities.

- Send an e-mail to the Coordinator to verify the activities that you plan to do. *All of the class materials will be set up at the School Forest.*
- Teachers will need to bring a few things from school: snacks, the School Forest keys, first aid kits, emergency contact information, extra clothing, and any additional activities they feel necessary for the class. Students will need adequate clothing for the day and, if you are staying for the entire day, a bag lunch (with a drink and nothing that needs a microwave).

## II. Sample Schedules:

### Full Day

9:00	Depart from School
9:30	Arrive at School Forest
9:30 – 10	Snack, Introduction, bathrooms
10 – 10:45	Rotation 1 A = Beach B = Art C = Nature Play Area D = Dunes
10:50 – 11:35	Rotation 2 A = Art B = Beach C = Dunes D = Nature Play Area
11:35 – 12:05	Lunch
12:10 – 12:55	Rotation 3
1:00 – 1:45	Rotation 4
1:45	Bathroom break, load bus
2:00	Depart from School Forest
2:30	return to Manitowoc

### Half Day

12:35-12:40	Load bus and depart
1:10	Arrive at forest
1:15-1:20	Bathroom Break
1:20-1:50	Group A – Nature Play Area Group B – Dunes or Beach
1:55-2:25	Group A – Dunes or Beach Group B – Nature Play Area
2:30	Bathrooms
2:45	Load bus and depart
3:15	Arrive in Manitowoc

## III. Introduction

Welcome the students to the School Forest. Review the Forest rules and expectations.

- Stay with the group (if you get lost, stay where you are... if you are nervous, hug a tree ☺)
- Stay on the trail (they are like the sidewalks of the forest)
- School rules apply (hands are for helping, listening ears, etc.)
- Be kind to the animals and plants (we are the guests in their home)
- Show the students the locations of: bathrooms, garbage cans, recycling if needed
- Use your “nature eyes and ears” to explore... please do not collect anything
- Use the School Forest tools with respect

## IV. Nature Play Area

The Nature Play Area includes different zones for learning and play. The space is used by our 4K and 5K students to explore and enjoy being outdoors. Some things you will find:

Music and Movement: instruments, dancing scarves, hammocks

Climbing: balancing logs, tree stump steps, rock hill, "bear den," lookout tower, and "otter slide"

Messy Materials Area: sand pit, sticks, shovels, rakes, trucks

Building: tree cookies, rocks, fossils, building blocks

Nature Art: pine cones, seashells, easels, slates, art materials, teepee

See the NPA lesson plan for more details.

V. Dunes Explorers

The sand dunes are located northwest of the buildings area (across Sandy Bay Road). When you arrive in the area, discuss the boundaries (stay in the sand area) and rules (no throwing sand).

You may choose to provide some structured play ideas or let the students explore options on their own. Some ideas for play: pails and shovels to dig for treasures, make sand castles, find the water table, run in the sand, go up the dunes and find different ways to get back down (roll, somersault, run, etc.). If the students don't come up with their own ideas, you can help to expand whatever they are doing. Many of the children have never been on sand dunes and just want some time to explore.

VI. Beach Explorers

To find the beach, hike east on Red Oak Trail. When you reach the end of Red Oak Trail, turn left (north). A little way up the trail, you will see the trail to the beach on your right.

When you arrive at the beach, show the kids the boundaries and review the rules (no going into the water, shoes must stay on, no throwing sand). You can decide if you think it is okay for the kids to throw rocks in the water... this decision is based on your kids, the size of your group, the weather, and the number of adults to watch over things.

The kids will find many cool things to explore. Encourage use of their "nature eyes" when they find feathers, dead fish, etc. You may choose to provide some structured play ideas or let the students explore options on their own. Some ideas for play: pails and shovels to dig for treasures, make sand castles, find the water table, run in the sand, and look for fossils.

VII. Art

*A few different art ideas are provided. Please let the School Forest Coordinator know which one (or two) you would like to do with your class.*

Colorful crowns - Go outside and collect natural materials (leaves, pine cones, seeds). Give each child a strip of cardboard with double-sided tape on one side. Let the students attach their natural items to the band. Use the extra tape and stapler to attach anything that does not stick to the band easily. The punch can be used to make holes to put stems/sticks through. Staple the ends together to make a crown.

*Materials: thin cardboard (such as cereal boxes) cut into strips about 2-2½ inches by 20 inches, double-sided tape, regular tape, staplers, hole punch, scissors, natural objects (students find)*

Nature's Shapes - Shape the clay into 3" balls for each student. Go outside and ask the students to collect natural objects (pine cones, acorns, leaves, pine needles) from the ground (1-3 items each). Go back inside and have the students make a clay "pancake" on the plastic plates. Press the natural objects into the clay. Use a pencil to etch an initial or name into the clay. You can add a small hole at the top and make them into necklaces/ornaments back at school. Discuss shapes; share the projects. Set the projects off to the side to dry.

*Materials: air dry clay, plastic plates, pencils, natural objects (students find)*

### Animal Action

Use the animal action cards. Each card shows an animal pose and on the back there are track patterns for that animal. The students can emulate these patterns while assuming the pose of that animal (the easiest pattern is on the top, more challenging in the middle, and the most difficult is on the bottom... start with the easiest). Create an animal conga line! You can do this along any of the trails at the School Forest or in an open area. Pass out the animal track worksheets. The students can color and cut out the animal tracks. You can also share information about the animals (included in the Action Cards packet).

*Materials: animal action cards, movement directions, track worksheets, crayons, scissors*

## VIII. Conclusion

Ask the class to review what they learned and discoveries that were made. Discuss the highlights from the day. What do you like best about the School Forest?

## IX. Cleanup

- Return supplies to building
- Pick up trash in and around building. Take garbage out to dumpster
- Close windows, shut off all lights, make sure all water is turned off
- Lock doors, shut driveway gate
- Give the School Forest Coordinator feedback on how to make this trip better in the future.

## Safety

While at the School Forest, teachers should carry first aid kits and two-way radios (provided at the forest). The first aid stations can be found in the Ehlert Lodge office, ELC classroom, and the upstairs of the

Krejcarek Building. Please report any safety issues to the School Forest Coordinator. Students should be supervised at all times. If you decide to go off trail, go in a clear area where branches cannot swing back and hit someone. Be aware of the plants you are traveling around so as not to pass by thorn-covered plants.

Deer ticks – please remind parents to check their children for ticks after a visit to the School Forest.

### Optional / Rainy Day Activities

Ask the School Forest Coordinator for the needed supplies:

- “Look What I Did with a Leaf” –a classroom set of these books, glue, scissors, crayons, sample outline pages, collecting bags, paper towels (if leaves will be wet).
- Puzzles - floor puzzles for an indoor station
- Tree Blocks – for indoor use, similar to those found in the Nature Play Area
- Music – Billy B sings about Trees or The Chickadees CD, song words, CD player, The Bear Song
- Movie – Stranger in the Woods (fall) or Lost in the Woods (spring)... these are shown to the 5K kids, but in a pinch could be used by the 4K groups
- Story time – select books from the ELC or Ehlert Lodge library
- Furs and bones – the coordinator can provide an explorative time about wildlife
- Art – water color paints, leaf rubbings, and other supplies can be taken out of the Nature Play Area backpack and used indoors
- Animal action – this activity can be done inside

### Resources

Cornell, Joseph. Sharing Nature with Children. Ananda Publications. 1979

Herman, Marina, Joseph Passineau, Ann Schimpf, and Paul Treuer. Teaching Kids to Love the Earth. Pfeifer-Hamilton, Duluth, MN. 1991.

Learning, Experiences, and Activities in Forestry. K-1 unit Wisconsin K-12 Forestry Lesson Guide. WDNR, 2004.

Lingelbach, Jenepher and Lisa Purcell. Hands-On Nature. Vermont Institute of Natural Science, Woodstock, Vermont. 2000

Danks, Fiona and Jo Schofield. Nature’s Playground. Chicago Review Press, Chicago, IL. 2007

Compiled by Patty Brodeen Maher, School Forest Coordinator, Manitowoc Public School District. January 2012.

Dear Parents,

On \_\_\_\_\_, our class will be visiting the Rahr Memorial School Forest. We will leave school at \_\_\_\_\_ and arrive back at \_\_\_\_\_.

Your child will need:

- Good walking shoes (no sandals)
- Long pants (to keep the bugs and plants off of the skin)
- Jacket or sweatshirt (depending on the weather)

Other (as indicated by your teacher)?

A bag lunch (with a drink and nothing that needs a microwave)

Students come to the School Forest to learn about the environment up close. The School Forest is a place to build upon classroom learning in an outdoor setting. The facilities include four classroom buildings with lavatories. The forest is a nearly 300-acre tract of land along Lake Michigan.

Most classes take place outside, so please make sure your child takes adequate clothing to stay warm and dry if the weather turns cold or wet.

For more information about the School Forest, go to:

<http://schoolsites.schoolworld.com/schools/Manitowoc/webpages/schoolforest/>

Thank you!